



June 2025 Gulf Council Meeting Summary

The Gulf Council (council) met in Tampa, Fla., on June 3-4, 2025. The council presented the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Trident Team with the 2024 Law Enforcement Team of the Year Award. During the meeting the council honored outgoing members, Tom Frazer and Troy Williamson. The following is a summary of the issues addressed during the meeting:



Spanish Mackerel

The council took final action to modify Spanish mackerel catch limits and accountability measures. The council decided to reduce catch limits based on results of the most recent stock assessment and resulting advice from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. The newly recommended stock annual catch limit will be 9,630,000 pounds landed weight. The council also chose to modify the accountability measure by only allowing the regional administrator closure authority for commercial and recreational fishing if the stock annual catch limit was exceeded in the previous fishing year and the stock ACL is reached or projected to be reached. This framework amendment will be transmitted to the secretary of commerce for consideration and implementation as soon as practicable.

Shallow-Water Grouper

Framework to Modify Catch Limits and Management Measures

The council took final action on a framework action to modify the catch limit and recreational season for the shallow-water grouper complex which is comprised of scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black grouper and yellowfin grouper based on the results of the SEDAR 68 stock assessment. The council selected the least conservative alternative to reduce the shallow-water grouper complex catch limit by 54.7 percent, resulting in an annual catch limit equal to 322,000 pounds gutted weight. The council also decided to open the recreational season on July 1 through Dec. 31.

This is a short-term management measure until Reef Fish Amendment 58A can be developed. Reef Fish Amendment 58A considers splitting the species in complex and tailoring management measures to individual species. This framework action will be transmitted to the secretary of commerce for consideration and implementation as soon as practicable.

Reef Fish Amendment 58A

Reef Fish Amendment 58A considers splitting the shallow-water grouper complex into two sub-complexes. One would be comprised of scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and the other would be comprised of black grouper and yellowfin grouper. This would allow management measures to be tailored to each sub-complex. The council heard updated projections for scamp and yellowmouth grouper that used finalized recreational and commercial landings data through 2023. The council's Scientific and Statistical Committee continued its recommendation of using a maximum sustainable yield equal to the yield at F_{40%}SPR based on the life history of both scamp and yellowmouth grouper, which transition from female to male as they age and demonstrate less reproductive resiliency relative to other reef fish. The updated projections would result in an acceptable biological catch limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper of 183,000 pounds gutted weight for 2027-2031. The council reviewed actions and alternatives in the document and plans to continue work during its August meeting.

2025 Recreational Gag Season

NOAA Fisheries presented the council with 2025 recreational season projections for gag grouper. In 2024, the recreational sector landed an estimated 252,367 pounds of gag in 16-days, which was 88,991 pounds over the 2024 recreational annual catch limit. That overage is subtracted from the scheduled 2025 annual catch limit, resulting in a 310,009 pounds catch limit for this year. While no season was announced, based on 2024 catch rates that would allow for a 14-day season and based on the average of 2023 and 2024 catch rates, the season would be 20-days. NOAA noted that it may not reduce the gag bag limit using an emergency rule, as recommended by the council, and committed to officially announcing the season and bag limit as soon as practicable.

Executive Orders Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation and Restoring American Seafood Completeness

The council heard an overview of recent Executive Orders. E.O. 14276: “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness” directs the council to develop a prioritized list of recommended actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and increase production. E.O. 14192: “Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation” instructs the council to update a list of deregulatory recommendations and develop a work plan and implementation schedule with the goals of stabilizing markets, improving access, enhancing profitability and preventing fishery closures. The council developed an initial list of items that could satisfy the executive orders and plans to finalize a prioritized list of recommendations during its August meeting after gathering input from its advisory panels and the public.

Deep-Water Grouper

The deep-water grouper complex is comprised of warsaw grouper, snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper and speckled hind, and is currently managed with a single annual catch limit for the complex. The most recent stock assessment on yellowedge grouper (SEDAR 85) determined that while yellowedge grouper is not overfished, it is experiencing overfishing. Based on the stock assessment results, which indicated low recent recruitment and increased recreational harvest, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended an overall decrease in the allowable harvest to end overfishing. While yellowedge grouper is the most commonly landed species in the deep-water grouper complex, it is frequently caught with the other deep-water grouper species. Thus, the SSC also recommended updated catch limits based on average historical landings for the other three species in the complex, and that the catch limits for those species and yellowedge grouper be combined.

In a previous meeting, the council selected a preferred alternative that would establish catch limits for the complex based on the SSC’s recommendations. This would result in an annual catch limit for the complex of 555,026 pounds gutted weight, which represents approximately a 50 percent reduction in allowable harvest. The council also previously selected a preferred alternative that will trigger a reduction in the recreational season if average recreational landings exceed the average recreational and total complex annual catch limit over a three-year period.

During this meeting, the council selected a preferred alternative that would establish a recreational annual catch limit and sector allocations using the most recent five years of landings. This would allocate 10.21 percent to the recreational sector and 89.79 percent to the commercial sector. The council will gather public input at three in-person and one virtual hearing before taking final action during its August 2025 meeting.

Red Grouper

NOAA Fisheries announced that it is working on an emergency rule that was requested by the council to increase red grouper catch limits. The 2025 catch limits would be set based on 90 percent of the acceptable biological catch limit recommended by the council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee after its review of updated red grouper projections, which were based on the most recent red grouper stock assessment. NOAA indicated that no recreational red grouper closure is expected for 2025 as long as the emergency rule is approved by the secretary of commerce.

The council began work on a reef fish amendment that addresses catch limits and allocations in response to the most recent stock assessment for red grouper (SEDAR 88) and resulting catch limit recommendations. The amendment also considers eliminating the recreational 20-fathom shallow-water grouper closure. The council added an alternative that would consider increasing the red grouper catch limit increases incrementally, rather than all at once. The council plans to continue work on this document and expects to take final action in January 2026 after it gathers public comment.

Ecosystem Based Fishery Management

The council heard an update on progress made on its Gulf Fishery Ecosystem Plan and an update on the related Inflation Reduction Act projects. The council also heard a summary of the approach for its pilot fishery ecosystem issue of red tide, as well as recommendations from its Ecosystem Technical Committee. The council will continue to work on the red tide fishery ecosystem issue and incorporating red tide research into management as appropriate.

LDWF Announces Recreational Gag Grouper Season to Open Sept. 1, 2025

LDWF issued a declaration of emergency to align the recreational gag grouper season with modifications made by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This action modifies the state recreational fishing season for Gulf gag grouper so that it begins on Sept. 1 instead of June 1, in order to match the federal season.

This change is intended to increase the length of the fishing season compared to a June 1 opening date, as fishing pressure is expected to be lower with a Sept. 1 start date.

Until the opening of the season, recreational harvest or possession of gag grouper is prohibited in state and federal waters. According to NOAA, the closure is necessary to prevent further overfishing of the gag grouper resource. The gag grouper population is considered overfished (the population is too low), and limiting harvest is necessary for the population to recover while the stock rebuilds.



LDWF Warns Public of Potential Fish Kills Statewide

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) reminds the public that high-water temperatures, extended cloudy weather and storms may lead to inland (freshwater) and nearshore marine fish kills in waterways across the state. Fish kills should be reported to the department by following the instructions on its fish kill webpage.

Since warm water has a lower capacity for storing oxygen than cool water, oxygen levels required to support fish life in shallow Louisiana aquatic habitats often exist within a delicate balance. Certain conditions can cause the scales to tip in the wrong direction, trapping fish in hypoxic (low oxygen) water, resulting in a fish kill.

Conditions that can lead to a fish kill include: low or stagnant water, extended excessive hot weather, heavy rainfall, floodwater receding from forested floodplains, extended cloudy weather, decaying debris/vegetation in the water, turbid runoff or nutrient-laden runoff. The bayous, marshes and ponds in the southern part of the state are particularly vulnerable to hypoxia.

Different species and sizes of fish have varying tolerances for hypoxia, so fish kills may only affect some sizes and species of fish, like shad, while other sizes and species survive. If fish kills occur in ponds, aeration, if possible, can help to alleviate hypoxic conditions and aid in the decomposition process if physical removal is not possible.

Decomposers and scavengers, including microbes, insects, crawfish, crabs, fish, alligators, turtles, raccoons and birds will all do their part in helping to clean up fish carcasses. When fall arrives, the shorter days and cooling temperatures lower the risk of low-oxygen fish kills.

Low oxygen fish kills have occurred in Louisiana since before recorded history, and our ecosystems have evolved to be resilient and bounce back from these naturally occurring events. It is very rare that all fish and aquatic organisms in a waterbody are killed during these low-oxygen events. Many fish and aquatic organisms will find refuge from the hypoxic waters and live to reproduce.

Even in cases of severe fish kills, aquatic organisms will usually repopulate affected areas by dispersing from nearby, connected, unaffected areas. This is one reason why maintaining adequate aquatic connectivity and fish passage (keeping naturally connected systems connected) is so important. In the year or two after a fish kill, survival of the young is higher than normal since there will be fewer predators and more resources available to the young fish, if conditions remain favorable. For this reason, stocking fingerlings is not usually warranted following low-oxygen fish kills.

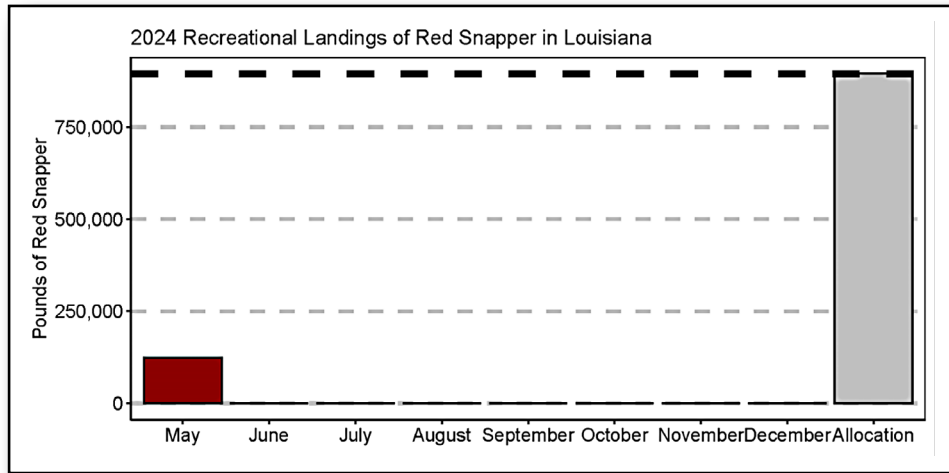
There are often temporary negative impacts to recreational and commercial fishing activities immediately following fish kills, but systems normally recover on their own. Patience is required for the mostly young fish in these recovering systems to grow into catchable sizes.

Fish kills resulting from other factors such as chemical spills, point of source pollution and bycatch are possible any time of year and should be reported. Extra measures and consideration for cleanup and recovery from these types of events are often necessary.

Documenting fish kills in Louisiana is important, whether caused by natural or non-natural events. Please report them to LDWF so biologists can investigate and document the kill as soon as possible. For information on how to report a fish kill or more information about the causes of fish kills, visit the fish kill webpage.

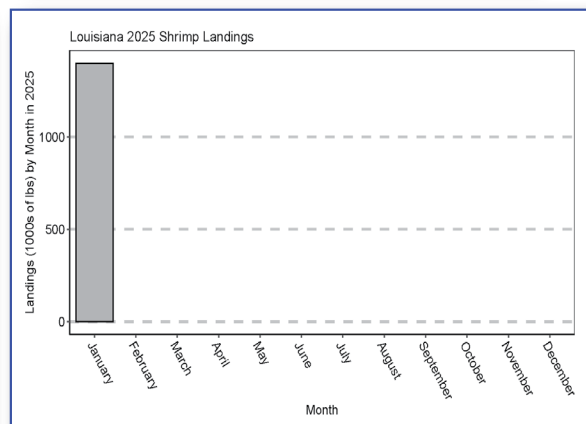
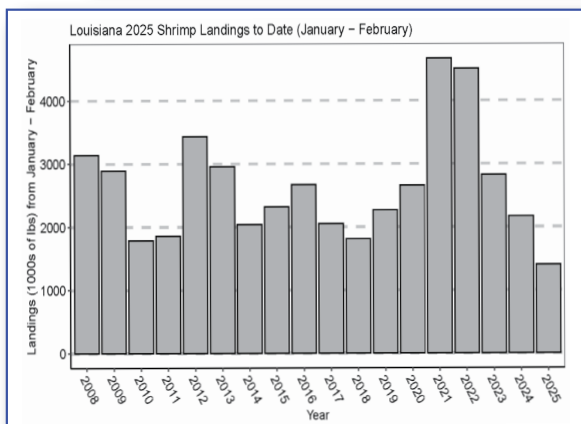
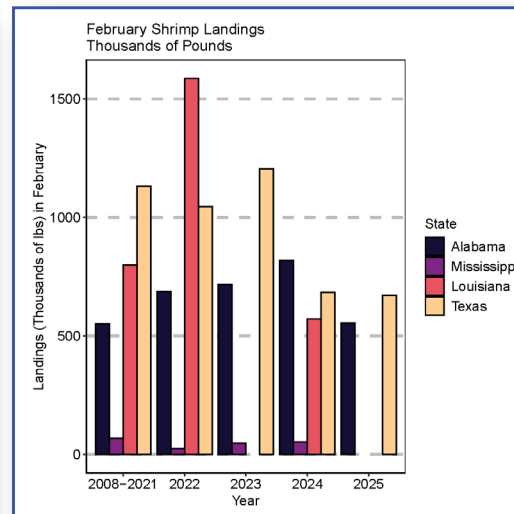
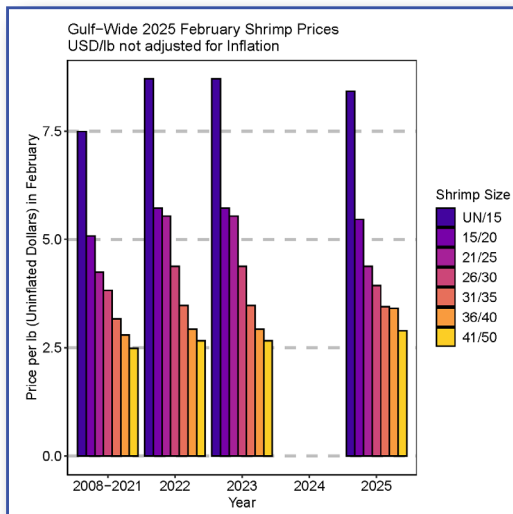
Louisiana Snapper Watch

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) released the red snapper landings estimates through May 18, 2025. LA Creel, LDWF's near real-time landings data collection program, indicates that 123,137 pounds, or 13.8 percent, of Louisiana's 2025 annual private recreational allocation of 894,955 pounds have been harvested during the 2025 Red Snapper season.



Louisiana Shrimp Watch

The shrimp watch data for the June issue includes data through February 2025. All landing data is based on trip ticket data provided by Gulf States Fisheries Commission and no estimations have been made.



The Gumbo Pot

Shrimp Po Boy Sandwich

Recipe courtesy of *simplyrecipes.com*



Ingredients

- 1-pound medium shrimp, shelled, deveined and tails removed
- 3/4 cup fine cornmeal
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Peanut oil for frying
- 1/2 head iceberg lettuce, shredded
- 2 to 3 tomatoes, sliced about 1/4 inch thick
- 4 small French sandwich rolls

Remoulade

- 1/4 cup mustard, preferably Creole mustard
- 1 1/4 cups mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons prepared horseradish
- 1 teaspoon pickle juice or vinegar
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce (such as Crystal or Tabasco)
- 1 large clove garlic, minced and smashed
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika
- 1 to 2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning

Directions:

1. *Make the remoulade sauce:*

If you are making your own remoulade, mix all the ingredients together in a bowl and set aside for 30 minutes or so; you don't have to wait that long, but the sauce will be better over time. In a large bowl, add the ingredients from the cornbread mix and those listed on the box into the bowl, mix until well combined.

2. *Heat the oil in the pan:*

Pour enough peanut oil in a large frying pan to come up about 1/4 inch, and set the pan over medium-high heat until a small amount of flour sizzles immediately when you drop some in. Bake for about 40 minutes, checking to make sure the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F.

3. *Dredge the shrimp:*

Mix the cornmeal, flour, Cajun seasoning and salt in a large bowl. Working with a few at a time, dredge the shrimp in the egg, then in the cornmeal-flour mixture.

4. *Fry the shrimp:*

Shake off any excess breading and fry the shrimp until golden on both sides, about 2 minutes total. Set the fried shrimp aside on paper towels to drain.

5. *Assemble the sandwiches:*

To assemble the sandwiches, slice the sandwich loaves almost all the way through and smear remoulade on both the top and bottom. Lay down a layer of shredded lettuce on the bottom of the sandwich, then arrange the shrimp on top. Lay 3-4 slices of tomato on the shrimp and press the top of the bread down on the bottom, compressing the sandwich a little.



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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

Please contact Lagniappe editor Jeffrey Plumlee at jplumlee@agcenter.lsu.edu

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<https://louisianalagniappe.wordpress.com/>

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